

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 11 to 20 are cancelled and claims 21 to 30 are added as set forth hereinafter.

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1 to 20 (Cancelled).

21. (New) A method for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement wherein different operator-controlled functions of said element are realizable in dependence upon the degree of actuation thereof, the method comprising the steps of:

actuating said element against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants;

providing a sensor to detect the displacement of said element and output a signal value (U) proportional to said displacement;

determining a quantity (dU/dt) characterizing that one of said spring constants corresponding to the instantaneous degree of the displacement of said element; and,

supplying said quantity (dU/dt) to a detector for detecting one of the operator-controlled functions of said element in

dependence upon said quantity ( $dU/dt$ ).

22. (New) The method of claim 21, comprising the further steps of:

determining a time-dependent course of said signal value;  
selecting a slope of said time-dependent course of said signal value ( $U$ ) as said quantity ( $dU/dt$ ) characterizing the corresponding spring constant; and,

detecting said one of said operator-controlled functions in dependence upon the slope of said signal value ( $U$ ).

23. (New) The method of claim 22, comprising the further step of detecting said one of said operator-controlled functions when the slope of said time-dependent course of said signal value ( $U$ ) lies in a pregiven region.

24. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein said pregiven region is defined by a threshold value.

25. (New) The method of claim 23, comprising the further step of selecting said pregiven region so that the time-dependent course of said signal value ( $U$ ) associated therewith occurs only via an automatic reset of said operator-controlled element.

26. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein said automatic reset is achieved with an abrupt reduction of said spring force.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein said abrupt reduction

of said spring force is effected by the spring constant assigned to the corresponding operator-controlled function.

28. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein said operator-controlled element is an accelerator pedal of a motor vehicle; one of said operator-controlled functions is a kick-down function or an escape-switch function to overcome an activated speed limiting; and, at least one degree of displacement of said accelerator pedal in the vicinity of a stop is assigned to said one operator-controlled function.

29. (New) The method of claim 21, comprising the further step of detecting one of said operator-controlled functions only when said one operator-controlled function is detected several times within a pregiven time interval.

30. (New) An arrangement for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement wherein different operator-controlled functions of said element are realizable in dependence upon the degree of actuation thereof, the arrangement comprising:

said element being actuatable against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants;

a sensor for detecting the displacement of said element and outputting a signal value (U) proportional to said displacement; means for determining a quantity ( $dU/dt$ ) characterizing that one of said spring constants corresponding to the instantaneous

degree of the displacement of said element; and,  
a detector for detecting one of the operator-controlled  
15 functions of said element in dependence upon said  
quantity ( $dU/dt$ ).